

**SHARPE JAMES**

MAYOR

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

07102

**P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

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Mayor Sharpe James today vowed to fight what he termed "unjust" a law which he says "denies" him any say in public housing.

"I will not rest until the appearance and maintenance of public housing is on a par with that of all other government assisted housing developments," he stated.

James said, "The greatest disappointment of my administration thus far is the enactment of Senate Bill 1206, which limits the mayor's appointments to the housing authority."

Under recent changes to the Faulkner Act, which governs the mayor-council form of government, under which Newark operates, the city's mayor can appoint only one member to the policy-making board of the housing authority, with five members named by the governing body and the remaining one by the Governor.

Previously, the mayor had the power to appoint six commissioners with the seventh chosen by the Governor.

The Mayor noted that he was further blocked from having "any input into public housing," by former Mayor Kenneth A. Gibson, who appointed a new commission to the housing authority, July 1, the day James took over the chief executive's position.

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JAMES AD 1

In what was called "an 11th hour move" Gibson named Ralph L. McNeal to fill the unexpired term of Inez Guerrero, which runs to April 20, 1989.

This action is being challenged by the current administration, which contends, according to James, that Gibson was no longer in office when he made the McNeal appointment.

James contended, "The previous administration had sent the former business administrator and his assistant, to be hired by the housing authority," and sought to prevent him (James) from appointing a commissioner, so he would not have "any say" in this decision.

He cautioned, "Throughout this power struggle, whoever serves as the Housing Authority Commissioner, must come to terms with the naked reality that public housing in Newark has deteriorated to an unacceptable level of human habitation.

"The real tragedy is that while millions of dollars have been wasted on ill-conceived NHA maintenance plans, millions of unused dollars are still sitting in the bank, which, with a competent staff could be put to use overnight to improve the quality of life in public housing, tear down surplus units, and build more low rise living spaces for our many citizens who each day beg for safe, decent and affordable housing."

James revealed during his mayoral campaign that the Newark Housing Authority is collecting more than \$13.5 million annually in federal subsidies for vacant apartments.

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JAMES AD 2

This information was contained in a document furnished by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which disclosed that 40 percent of the 12,931 units of public housing in New Jersey's largest city are unoccupied.

The report further stated that the housing authority receives a monthly subsidy of \$222.11 for each unit of public housing, whether occupied or not.

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